

Becoming a Sponsor

SO SOMEONE HAS ASKED YOU TO BE THEIR SPONSOR. WHAT DO YOU DO?

First, remember you cannot carry something you haven't got. Do you have a Sponsor? Your ability to share with a new prospect are limited to your own experience, so you cannot show a newcomer how to work with a sponsor if you do not work with a Sponsor. Call your Sponsor as soon as someone asks you and whisper, "What do I do?" Your Sponsor is your best guide to being a Sponsor.

Do you have a network of people in the Program with whom you can discuss your life and options in recovery? Do you continue to do step work with your sponsor, even after years of sobriety? Do you have a spiritual life and will you be able to share what you have with the newcomer, even if they are not of the same faith as you?

The experience of a Sponsor and Sponsee working together is unique and should be between equals, one of whom has more experience in Recovery than the other. It is a close teacher / student relationship that may evolve into a friendship, but it is not necessary to become friends for successful Sponsorship.

Being a Sponsor does not mean you are superior to the newcomer, just someone who is a little further along the path than the Sponsee, and willing to share what you've done.

A Sponsor helps the Sponsee understand the basics of the Program, works

the Sponsee through the Steps (particularly the 4th and 5th Steps).

A Sponsor shares basic information in the Big Book, most often by sitting together to go through the first 181 pages out loud, defining the words and concepts to make the Sponsee aware of the tools being laid at his feet.

WHAT A SPONSOR IS NOT

A sponsor is not a bank. Lending or borrowing money between a sponsor and a sponsee can taint the relationship. The two of you will talk about financial issues, but money can ruin what could be a working relationship that could help both.

A sponsor is not a taxi service. A sponsor may take a sponsee to meetings, particularly to the Sponsor's Home Group, but the sponsee should be encouraged to develop a new network of people in the program for rides and discussion.

A sponsor is not a counselor. That means marriage- or employment-counselor. You will discuss the sponsee's issues and problems, but you do not have any authority other than your own experience and background in the Steps. Even if you are a licensed counselor, this is not a professional relationship.

A sponsor is not a therapist. Again, even if the sponsor is a licensed therapist, this is not a professional relationship. The Sponsor's job is to help the newcomer through Recovery using the Steps. The principles in your daily life are the focus of the Sponsor and Sponsee. This will cover areas of money, relationships, employment, sex, desire, defects, and spiritual life.

A SPONSOR IS NOT PERFECT

No one in our Program has attained perfection, but progress is our ongoing goal. You may make mistakes, but learn from them and share with your Sponsee how mistakes can be used as part of the lessons required for Recovery.

What your Sponsee sees you do is every bit as important as anything you say.

If you do not know something, be honest. Your willingness to seek an answer for something you do not know can be a powerful lesson for your prospect.

SUCCESSFUL SPONSORSHIP

Having a Sponsor or being a Sponsor does not guarantee that the prospect will stay sober.

If your Sponsee goes out and starts drinking again, find someone else to work with who may want what you have to offer.

If you stay sober, the Sponsorship has been effective.

If your Sponsee stays sober, it is not because of your wonderful Sponsor-

ship. It is because you have helped the Sponsee to find and develop his spiritual awakening and personal relationship to a personal higher power.

WHAT TO CALL THE PEOPLE YOU SPONSOR?

Over the years there are many different terms used to describe the person being Sponsored. Dr. Bob used “cookie” and Bill used “protoge.”

In some parts of the country they are called “sponsees,” “babies,” or “pigeons.”

Although it is widely used in the Northeast as a term describing the tendency for well-cared homing or racing pigeons to rain excrement onto their handlers, “pigeons” was a term used by Dr. Bob. In his area, when someone was too drunk to find their way home and had to be led, they were “pigeon-eyed” and needed special attention.

Dr. Bob used the phrase with a great deal of affection for those for whom he tried to share the gift of sobriety.



THE SPONSOR MAGAZINE SYMBOL

Before we started the magazine, we wanted to find a simple way to convey the image of Sponsorship.

We finally arrived at two figures, on the Steps, one of whom has a light to find his way. The only reason he has a light is because someone gave it to him.

The original symbol showed many people on the steps, and the ones further up the stairway had lamps. But the “Keep It Simple” guidance made us reduce it to one pair of travelers on the path.

